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Galic Gothic: Bureaucrat's Note Becomes 'Greenpeace Affair'

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PARIS—Like many good espionage mysteries, France's "Greenpeace affair" began with a simple bureaucratic note.

The note was written six months ago—on March 1—by the head of the French nuclear testing center at Mururoa Atoll in the South Pacific, Adm. Henri Fages.

France, the admiral urged, should step up its intelligence-gathering efforts to "anticipate" a planned protest campaign by the Greenpeace environmental organization against French nuclear tests.

The significance of the verb *anticiper*, underlined twice in the memo, lies at the heart of the most embarrassing political scandal yet faced by President Francois Mitterrand's Socialist government.

Was the choice of the word, which carries a vague connotation in French of "acting to forestall," insignificant, as Fages now maintains? Or was it a deliberately ambiguous instruction that set in motion a disastrous chain of events culminating in the sinking of a Greenpeace ship and the death of a Portuguese-born Dutch photographer on the other side of the world?

The answer to these questions must be sought in a series of tantalizing clues that have turned up after the sabotage of the Rainbow Warrior in the New Zealand port of Auckland July 10.

Alternative solutions have been offered to the mystery.

One is the legal case laboriously being put together by New Zealand police, who have arrested two officers of the French secret service and charged them with murder, arson and conspiracy.

The other is an official report by a French government investigator acknowledging that agents of the General Directorate for External Security (DGSE) were in New Zealand to spy on Greenpeace but clearing them of the crime against the Rainbow Warrior.

Ironically, one of the principal arguments in favor of the innocence of the men from *la piscine* (the swimming pool), as the General Directorate is known here, is the wealth of incriminating evidence against them. So Galic is the trail, observed a directorate source sarcastically, that the only missing clues are a baguette bread loaf, a black beret and a bottle of Beaujolais.

Could the "swimming pool" really have bungled so badly?

Adm. Fages had every reason to be angry about the Greenpeace plans, which reportedly included the idea of escorting boatloads of French Polynesian separatists toward Mururoa.

The French military long had regarded the environmental organization with suspicion, even loathing, believing it to be infiltrated by Communists and Soviet spies opposed to France's independent nuclear deterrent, known as the *force de frappe*. It was partly in response to a previous Greenpeace campaign that French nuclear tests were moved underground in 1975, a much more expensive and cumbersome procedure than holding them in the atmosphere.

The official French investigator, Bernard Tricot, has conceded that news of the resumption of Greenpeace protests provoked considerable "irritation" in Paris. But he has cited government documents indicating that plans for dealing with the organization this time were exactly the same as in previous years, namely deploying the Navy to prevent the protesters from entering French territorial waters.

In fact, there is evidence that the idea of sabotaging a Greenpeace ship had been considered by some French military officers in the past. According to Bernard Stasi, a former minister for France's overseas territories, the military almost succeeded in getting such a plan approved in 1973 but was overruled by the politicians.

The Fages memorandum was followed by a meeting between Defense Minister Charles Hernu and the head of the secret service, Adm. Pierre Lacoste. Hernu now says he merely instructed the service to "observe" and "infiltrate" Greenpeace. As Lacoste remembers the conversation, the defense minister also agreed to let the agents "reflect on ways and means to counteract" Greenpeace initiatives.

Tricot, on the basis of the testimony of senior secret service officials, insisted that there was never

any question of authorizing direct action against the Rainbow Warrior. He does not explain in his report, however, why four of the six French agents later sent to New Zealand belonged not to the directorate's "research" division, but to its "action division," the "James Bond" wing of *la piscine*.

The government has refused to reveal how much the Greenpeace operation cost, but it has been unofficially calculated at around 3 million francs, or \$400,000. This was more than the directorate's budget could bear: financial approval for the operation, according to Tricot, had to be obtained from Gen. Jean Saulnier, President Mitterrand's chief military aide.

The first French agent to show up in New Zealand in late April was Lt. Christine Cabon, a member of the directorate's research staff. Before leaving France, she had joined the ecological organization, the Friends of the Earth. Posing as Frederique Bonlieu, a geologist opposed to French nuclear tests in the Pacific, she infiltrated the Auckland branch of Greenpeace.

Cabon left Auckland on May 24, her mission apparently accomplished. Useful information that she supplied to the directorate included a map of Auckland harbor later found in possession of one of the agents. She was last heard of at an archeological dig in Israel in mid-July, from which she sent a postcard to her old "friends" at Greenpeace deploring the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.

Back in France, meanwhile, two more teams of agents were preparing to be sent to New Zealand. Each was headed by a trained combat frogman and member of the directorate's action division: Maj. Alain Mafart and Master Sgt. Roland Verge.

Senior directorate officers interviewed by Tricot insisted that the two teams had entirely different missions in New Zealand and were unaware of each other's existence.

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